TOWN OF ATHABASCA
PARKING STUDY

NOVEMBER 1989

Parkview Unit
Planning Branch
Alberta Municipal Affairs

TOWN OF ATHABASCA PARKING STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Over the summer of 1989, the Athabasca business community, Town Council and the Planning Branch had a series of discussions regarding the amount, location, use and effectiveness of parking in downtown Athabasca. It was perceived that there was a lack of parking space in the town and that some action was needed before the situation became critical. It was also recognized that in order to define the problem more clearly, and develop workable solutions, more data on actual parking characteristics and habits were needed.

In September, 1989 the Planning Branch was asked to do a detailed parking study of the town's business core. This report summarizes the data collected over two days in October, 1989. It should be noted that this study represents a "snapshot" - it identifies the parking pattern for a particular time period. Nevertheless, given the methodology used, the results should provide a useful indication of basic parking habits in the town.

Parking problems are as much perceptual as they are factual. This study cannot determine whether or not the parking situation in Athabasca is satisfactory; that is the community's decision. We hope this study will be helpful to Council in clarifying that situation and in making decisions about parking.

METHODOLOGY

STUDY AREA

The boundaries of the study area are shown in Figure 1. The survey included all on-street, laneway and private and public parking lots shown by the shaded area within these boundaries.

TIMING

Thursday, October 12 and Friday, October 13 were considered appropriate days to collect parking data. These coincided with a pay period, and probably represented a typical shopping pattern. Data were collected from 10:30 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. Thursday, and from 10:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Friday.

TECHNIQUE

The method used to gather data was a "license plate survey". This involved walking predetermined routes at prescribed intervals over the two days and recording occupied and vacant parking spaces. Occupied parking spaces were recorded by noting down the vehicle's license plate number. In this way, the location and approximate duration of long-term parking could be determined.

Over most of the downtown core the license plate survey was conducted at 1 to 1½ hour intervals. On 50th Street and 49th Street, between 49th Avenue and 50th Avenue, the survey was conducted at 10 to 15 minute intervals. This permitted more accurate recording of parking patterns in these high demand areas.

In addition to the license plate survey, observers were also instructed to note special circumstances, such as vehicles loading or unloading in laneways, cars parked improperly, and out of province license plates.

PARKING SUPPLY

An inventory of available parking spaces within the study area was conducted. Where stall spaces were marked (as in some parking lots), they were counted. Where stalls were not marked (curbside, in laneways and in several parking lots), the space was paced off allowing approximately 22 feet for a parallel stall, 12 feet for an angle stall and 10 feet for a right angle stall. Laneways, access points, loading bays, garbage bins, fire hydrants and other obstacles were taken into consideration.

Using this technique, the actual parking supply within the shaded area shown in Figure 1 is:

On-Street	
Major Streets	206 spaces
Minor Streets	70 spaces
Laneways	123 spaces
Restricted Parking	14 spaces
Subtotal	413 spaces
Off-Street	
Major Parking Lots	285 spaces
Minor Parking Lots	149 spaces
Restricted Parking	59 spaces
Subtotal	493 spaces
Total	906 spaces

Figure 2 and Table 1 provide a more detailed breakdown of available parking spaces.

FINDINGS

OCCUPANCY RATE

Occupancy rates for major streets (49 Street, 50 Street and 49 Avenue), laneways, and selected major parking lots are shown in Tables 2 to 5.

Parking areas with occupancy rates of 80% or higher are considered to be operating at or near capacity. Occupancy rates of 60% to 80% are considered to be moderate, while areas with occupancy rates below 60% are considered to be underutilized.

At all locations except the east side of 49 Street, occupancy rates were higher on Friday than on Thursday.

The areas that were at or near parking capacity were the following (see Figure 3):

- West side of 49 Street from 12:00 to 1:00 on Friday
- East side of 49 Street from 11:30 to 1:30 Thursday and 12:20 to 1:00 on Friday
- 49 Avenue between 49 Street and 50 Street from 11:30 to 1:30 and 4:00 to 5:15 Thursday, and 12:30 to 7:15 Friday
- The laneway between 48 Street and 49 Street all day Thursday and Friday
- The laneway east of 50 Street, the old provincial lot and Pro Hardware parking lot at periodic intervals over the two days.

The areas which were underutilized by parkers were the following:

- The Super Foods parking lot both days (30% - 51% occupancy)
- The TomBoy parking lot on Thursday (15% - 63% occupancy)
- The Value Drug parking lot Thursday (20% - 55% occupancy)
- The municipally owned parking lot behind the Macleods Store both days (3% - 22% occupancy)
- 49 Avenue between 50 Street and 51 Street both days (14% - 43% occupancy)
- 49 Avenue between 48 Street and 49 Street both days except during the lunch hour (31% - 56% occupancy)

DURATION OF STAY

Duration of stay was determined for major streets (49 Street, 50 Street, 49 Avenue), all the laneways, the largest parking lot, and the four busiest parking lots. The results are shown in Table 6 and Figure 4.

The areas with the greatest turnover were:

- all of the major streets (from 91% to 96% of all parkers stayed one hour or less)
- Value Drug parking lot (80% of all parkers stayed one hour or less)
- Super Foods parking lot (81% of all parkers stayed one hour or less)
- TomBoy parking lot (virtually all parkers stayed one hour or less).

The areas which had long-term parkers were:

- all the laneways (22% to 34% of all parkers stayed all day)
- the old provincial parking lot (57% of all parkers stayed over two hours; 52% of all parkers stayed all day)
- Pro Hardware parking lot (51% of all parkers stayed over two hours; 20% of all parkers stayed all day).

It can be assumed that the all-day parkers are employees of nearby businesses.

EMPLOYEE PARKING

Volunteers from the Athabasca business community completed a survey of employee parking needs in the downtown area. The results are as follows:

Number of businesses surveyed	- 64
Number of employees	- 366
Number of employee parking spaces required	- 314
Number of parking spaces provided on-site (including laneways)	- 215
Number of parking spaces required off-site	- 99

Some significant findings of this survey are:

- Employees of the provincial government and AGT use up to 20 spaces in the old provincial lot (the capacity of this lot is only 25)

- The ten employees of Hunter's Motors park on the street or in the Community Centre lot
- 12 TomBoy employees park on the TomBoy lot or in the lane behind the store
- Employees require 21 parking spaces in the laneway west of 50 Street: a total of 44 are available
- Employees require 54 parking spaces in the laneway east of 50 Street: a total of 74 are available.

PARKING NORTH OF 50 AVENUE

The number of cars parked along the railway right-of-way north of 50 Avenue was recorded at hourly intervals (see Table 7). The area east of 50 Street was well used by trucks and buses, as well as by hotel patrons. The area west of 50 Street was underutilized.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

- Very few out-of-province license plates were recorded
- Highway traffic, especially large vehicles and trucks, caused major congestion at the intersection of 50 Street and 50 Avenue
- Many shoppers were observed parking on the west side of 50 Street and jaywalking to the east side.
- On many occasions delivery trucks blocked laneways while loading and unloading
- Value Drug parking lot was used by many customers of other businesses
- Pharmasave and Tags lots were used by Union Hotel customers, as was the parking area north of the hotel, across 50 Avenue
- ALCB employees were observed using customer parking spaces rather than the spaces marked "employees"
- Handicapped stalls and Taxi stands were rarely observed being used
- There was very high turnover in the 15 minute parking zone in front of the Post Office on 49 Street

- People were not observed parking in the Super Foods lot and then shopping elsewhere
- There were several observations of cars being moved 7 to 10 spaces further along a street
- The vacant lot between the Post Office and Video Store was never occupied, although it could have been used for parking
- Although stores remain open till 9:00 p.m., there was very little traffic or activity after 7:00 p.m.
- Generally, drivers on 50 Street moved slowly and cautiously, and pedestrians had no difficulty crossing the street
- The streets were littered with trash
- People who stopped to ask what the surveyors were doing were pleased to learn it was a parking study. All mentioned that parking was a problem in the town.
- There were many instances of sloppy parking, particularly on 50 Street
- Many vehicles were left running, unlocked and unattended.

TABLE 1. INVENTORY OF PARKING SPACES

Major Streets		
50 St (49-50 Ave)	44	
49 St (49-50 Ave)	67	
48 St (49-50 Ave)	33	
50 Ave (47-50 St)	12	
49 Ave (47-50 St)	50	
Subtotal	206	spaces
Minor Streets		
52 St (49-50 Ave)	5	
52 St (49-50 Ave)	31	
50 St (48-49 Ave)	27	
50 Ave (50-52 St)	7	
Subtotal	70	spaces
Laneways		
Block 22 (E of 48 St)	17	
Block 6 (E of 49 St)	21	
Block 1 (E of 50 St)	48	
Block 2 (W of 50 St)	25	
Block 3 (W of 51 St)	12	
Subtotal	123	spaces
Restricted Parking (Employees, Private)		
Provincial Building	16	
AGT	4	
ALCB	5	
Hair Salon/Apts	7	
Post Office	4	
Merchants Variety	4	
Giorgios	3	
Town Office	7	
Apt Bldg (50 St at 48 Ave)	6	
AGT Compound	8	
School Division	4	
Professional Bldg	5	
Subtotal	73	spaces

Major Parking Lots		
Super Foods	71	
TomBoy	27	
Value Drug	20	
Old Provincial Lot	25	
Pro Hardware	20	
Behind Macleods	32	
Athabasca Centre	40	
CIBC	20	
Burger Bar	30	
Subtotal	285	spaces
Minor Parking Lots		
AVC	15	
Community Centre	8	
Treasury Branch	12	
Medical Centre	17	
Venture Place	10	
Saan	13	
News/Laundry	15	
ALCB	15	
Pharmacy	11	
Petro Canada	17	
Red Rooster	8	
Tags	8	
Subtotal	149	spaces
Total	906	spaces
Total off-street spaces	507	
Total spaces on-street and in laneways	399	

TABLE 2. OCCUPANCY RATE ON 49 STREET AND 50 STREET
(figures show percentage of parking spaces that are occupied)

Time	WEST SIDE		EAST SIDE		50 STREET	
	Thurs	Friday	Thurs	Friday	Thurs	Friday
10:30	49	55	55	55	64	77
11:30	64	78	80	75	73	70
12:00	72	81	90	55	64	64
12:30	70	94	85	85	64	84
1:00	57	82	85	100	59	66
1:30	81	70	100	75	45	75
2:00	66	66	75	55	48	61
3:00	45	61	50	70	59	73
4:00	47	58	55	75	66	73
4:45	55	72	70	45	68	80
5:30	49	63	80	55	48	66
6:00	--	54	--	40	--	61
7:15	--	40	--	25	--	32

TABLE 3. OCCUPANCY RATE ON 49 AVENUE
(figures show percentage of spaces that are occupied)

Time	50-51 STREET		49-50 STREET		48-49 STREET	
	Thurs	Friday	Thurs	Friday	Thurs	Friday
10:20	36	43	67	--	38	25
10:45	--	--	--	73	--	--
11:30	36	--	93	--	31	50
12:00	--	43	--	--	--	--
12:30	43	--	113	107	56	75
1:00	--	29	--	--	--	--
1:30	36	--	87	107	75	75
3:00	21	21	67	93	56	56
3:45	--	36	--	--	--	--
4:00	29	--	80	80	44	50
4:30	--	29	--	--	--	--
4:55	--	--	--	100	--	44
5:15	--	--	93	--	38	--
5:50	--	14	--	--	--	94
6:45	--	--	--	--	--	--
7:10	--	--	--	100	--	100

TABLE 4. OCCUPANCY RATE IN MAJOR PARKING LOTS
(figures show percentage of stalls that are occupied)

Time	SUPER FOODS		TOMBOY		VALUE DRUG		OLD PROV.LOT		PRO HARDWARE		MACLEODS	
	Thu	Fri	Thu	Fri	Thu	Fri	Thu	Fri	Thu	Fri	Thu	Fri
10:20	44	37	33	37	20	35	68	68	65	75	19	22
11:40	38	41	63	33	40	50	68	72	65	70	16	16
12:20	35	39	15	37	40	75	84	76	55	80	16	22
1:20	37	52	26	70	55	70	60	76	60	70	13	19
3:00	44	51	30	44	35	50	76	80	65	50	16	19
4:00	45	51	33	74	20	40	72	76	60	50	13	6
5:15	42	46	30	59	20	40	16	64	35	60	6	3
5:50	--	42	--	78	--	35	--	48	35	50	--	--
7:10	--	30	--	48	--	35	--	24	--	20	--	--

TABLE 5. OCCUPANCY RATE IN LANEWAYS
(figures show percentage of parking spaces that are occupied)

Time	BLOCK 2 (W OF MAIN ST)		BLOCK 1 (E OF MAIN ST)		BLOCK 6 (48-49 ST)	
	Thurs	Friday	Thurs	Friday	Thurs	Friday
10:20	76	--	67	--	114	109
10:45	--	72	--	69	--	--
11:30	72	--	75	--	86	95
12:00	--	68	--	88	--	--
12:30	72	--	81	--	114	100
1:00	--	56	--	75	--	--
1:30	68	--	79	--	133	109
3:00	68	64	73	88	109	95
4:00	64	68	65	77	95	105
4:30	--	72	--	79	--	--
5:15	44	--	56	--	43	105
5:50	--	--	--	--	--	52
6:45	--	56	--	52	--	--
7:10	--	--	--	--	--	10

TABLE 6. DURATION OF STAY
(figures show percentage of total parkers)

		Total	1 hr. or less	1 to 2 hrs.	over 2 hrs.
49 St (E)	Thurs	122	91	4	5
	Fri	158	92	6	3
49 St (W)	Thurs	333	92	7	1
	Fri	435	93	5	2
50 St	Thurs	425	96	4	1
	Fri	484	96	3	1
49 Ave	Thurs	111	96	6	6
	Fri	159	87	9	4
Lane (Block 2)	Thurs	41	46	15	39
	Fri	46	54	13	33
Lane (Block 1)	Thurs	75	43	7	51
	Fri	78	42	14	44
Lane (Block 6)	Thurs	69	45	7	48
	Fri	46	41	20	39
Lane (Block 22)	Thurs	16	38	19	44
	Fri	19	47	11	42
Old Prov. Lot	Thurs	29	45	3	52
	Fri	29	34	3	62
Value Drug Lot	Thurs	25	76	12	12
	Fri	25	82	7	11
Pro Hardware Lot	Thurs	25	40	12	48
	Fri	30	43	3	53
TomBoy Lot	Thurs	58	100	0	0
	Fri	128	100	0	0
Super Foods Lot	Thurs	111	78	7	14
	Fri	162	82	6	12

TABLE 7. CARS PARKED NORTH OF 50 AVENUE

Time	51 St to 52 St	50 St to 51 St	48 St to 50 St
Thursday			
10:20	1	4	11
11:30	5	2	9
12:30	1	4	13
1:30	4	3	9
3:00	4	6	9
4:00	1	4	8
5:15	0	4	13
Friday			
10:45	3	5	9
11:45	1	6	10
12:15	1	7	9
12:45	1	4	13
1:40	1	6	11
3:15	5	4	15
4:10	1	4	13
5:15	2	3	10
6:00	0	3	10
6:15	0	1	13

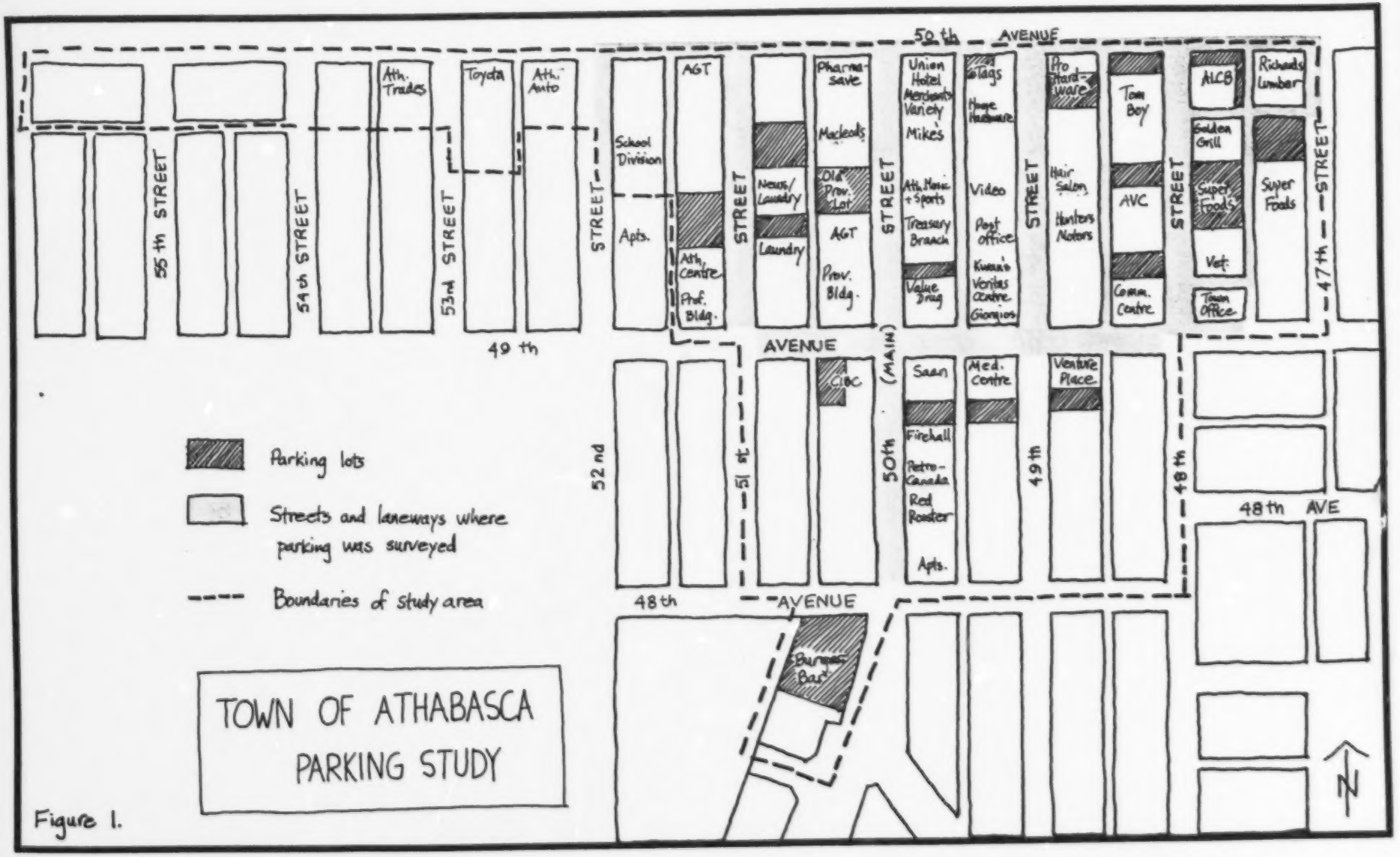
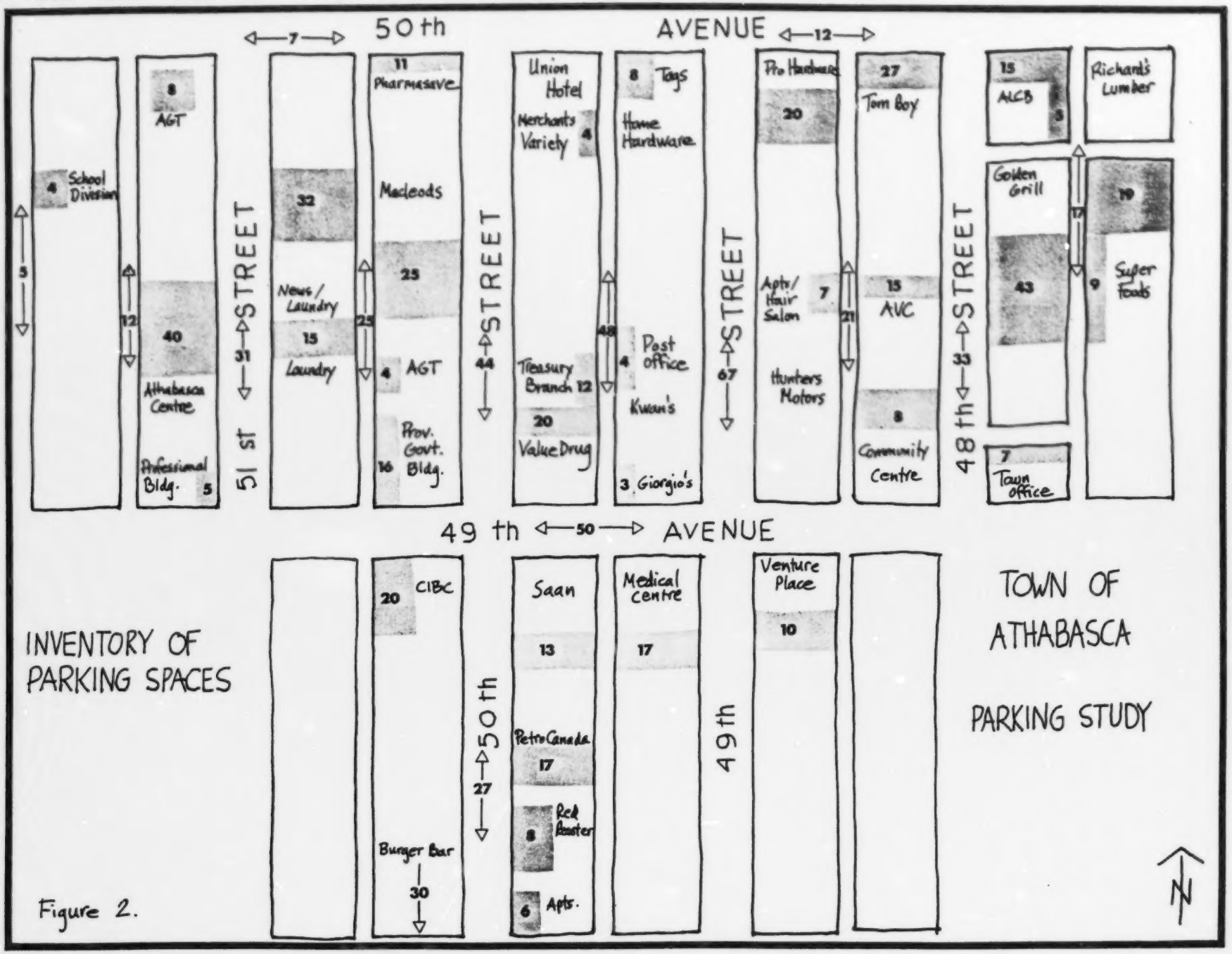

50 th AVENUE
55 th STREET
54 th STREET
53rd STREET
49 th
Ath. Trades
Toyota
Ath. Auto
School Division
Apts.
AGT
Ath. Centre
Prof. Bldg.
News/ Laundry
Laundry
Pharma-save
Mackeads
Old Prov. Lot
AGT
Prov. Bldg.
Union Hotel
Merchants Variety
Mikes
Ath. Motor + Sports
Treasury Branch
Value Drug
Tags
Huge Hardware
Video
Post office
Kinna's Veritas Centre
Giorgios
Pro Hard-ware
Hair Salon
Hunters Motors
Tom Boy
AVC
Comm. Centre
ALCB
Golden Grill
Super Foods
Vet
Town Office
Richards Lumber
Super Foods
47th STREET
AVENUE
CIBC
Saan
Firehall
Petro-Canada
Red Rooster
Apts.
Med. Centre
Venture Place
52 nd
51 st
50th (MAIN)
49 th
48th
48th AVE
AVENUE
Burgess Bar
Parking lots
Streets and laneways where parking was surveyed
Boundaries of study area
TOWN OF ATHABASCA
PARKING STUDY
N

Figure 1.


50th AVENUE
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48 th STREET
50th
49th
School Division
AGT
Athabasca Centre
Professional Bldg.
News / Laundry
Laundry
Pharmasave
Macleods
AGT
Prov. Govt. Bldg.
Union Hotel
Merchants Variety
Treasury Branch
Value Drug
Tags
Home Hardware
Post office
Kwan's
Giorgio's
Pro Hardware
Apts/ Hair Salon
Hunters Motors
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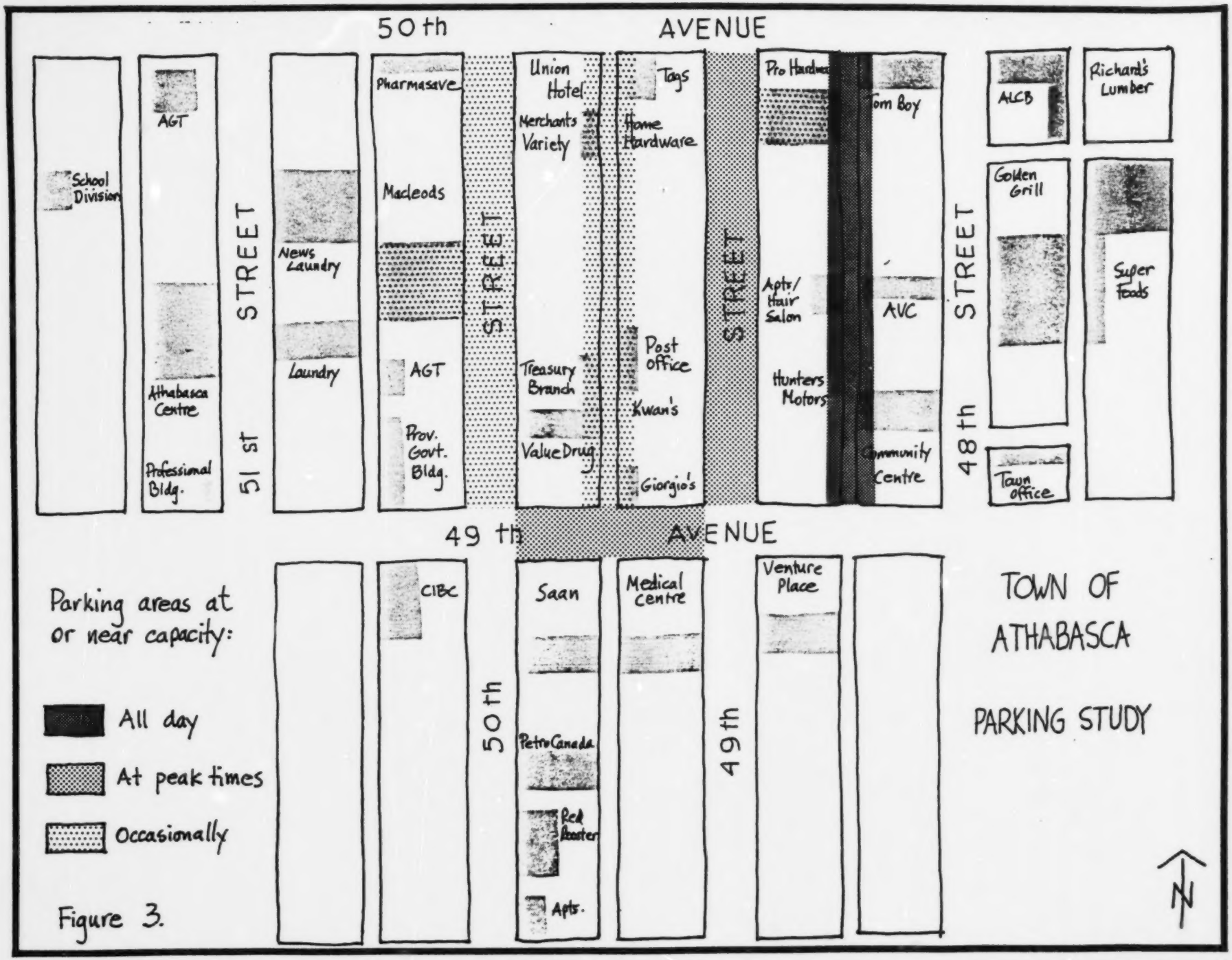
Community Centre
ALCB
Richard's Lumber
Golden Grill
Super Foods
Town office
CIBC
Burger Bar
Saan
Petro Canada
Red Rooster
Apts.
Medical centre
Venture Place
INVENTORY OF PARKING SPACES
TOWN OF ATHABASCA
PARKING STUDY
N

Figure 2.


50th AVENUE
School Division
AGT
Athabasca Centre
Professional Bldg.
51 st STREET
News Laundry
Laundry
Pharmasave
Macleods
AGT
Prov. Govt. Bldg.
Union Hotel
Merchants Variety
Treasury Branch
Value Drug
Tags
Home Hardware
Post office
Kwan's
Giorgio's
STREET
Pro Hardware
Apts/ Hair Salon
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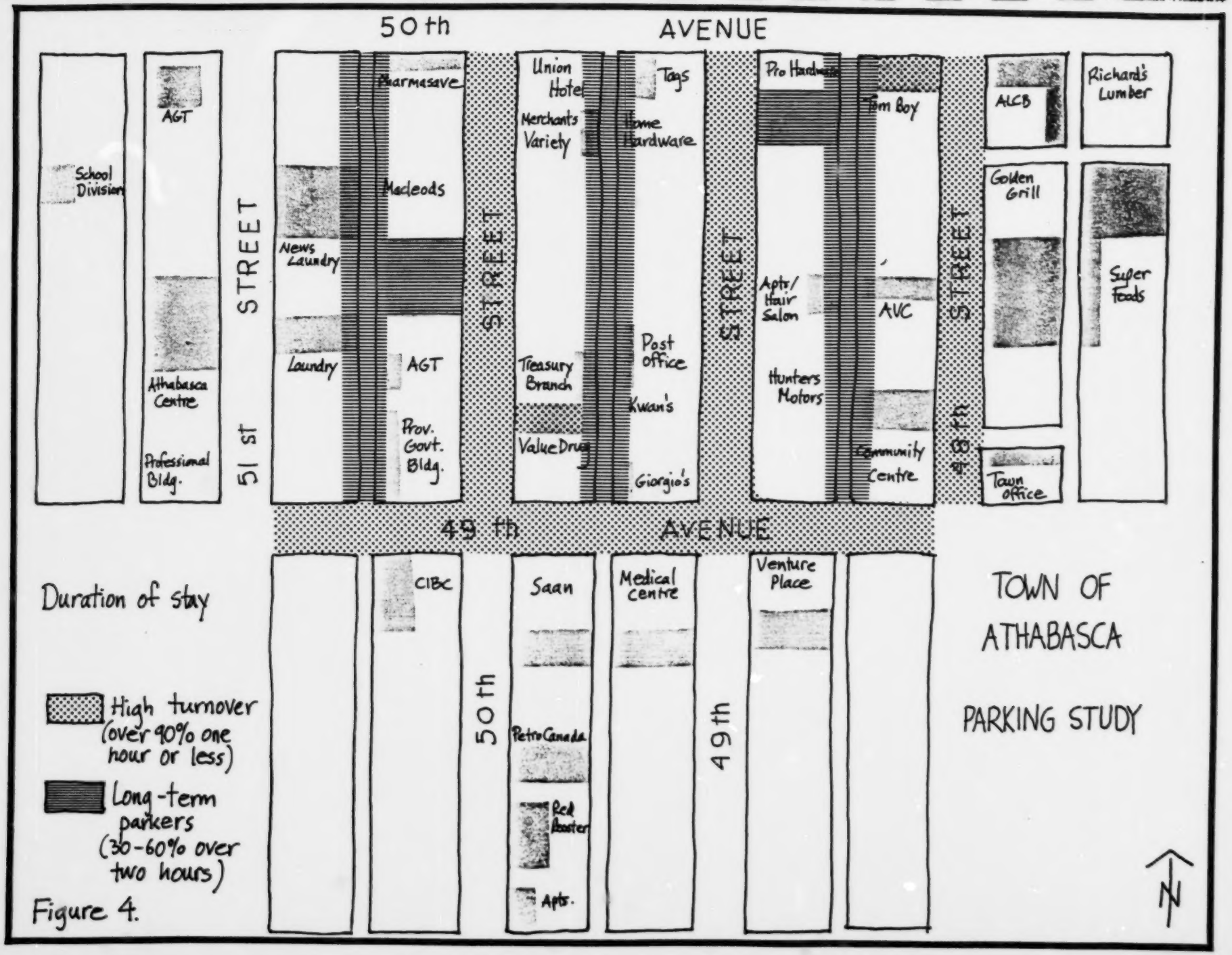
Community Centre
48th STREET
ALCB
Golden Grill
Town office
Richard's Lumber
Super Foods
49 th AVENUE
CIBC
50th
Saan
Petro Canada
Rock Chester
Apts.
Medical centre
49th
Venture Place
Parking areas at or near capacity:
All day
At peak times
Occasionally
TOWN OF ATHABASCA
PARKING STUDY
N

Figure 3.


50th AVENUE
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51 st STREET
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News
Laundry
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Golden Grill
Super Foods
Town office
49 th AVENUE
CIBC
Saan
Medical centre
Venture Place
PetroCanada
Red Rooster
Apts.
50th
49th
Duration of stay
High turnover (over 90% one hour or less)
Long-term parkers (30-60% over two hours)
TOWN OF ATHABASCA
PARKING STUDY
N

Figure 4.